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Letter dated 21 June 2010 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to convey the attached communication dated 2 June 2010, which I have received from the Deputy Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Claudio Bisogniero, transmitting the quarterly report on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan covering the period from 1 November 2009 to 31 January 2010 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

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Please recycle

Annex

Letter dated 2 June 2010 from the Deputy Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1386 (2001) and 1510 (2003), I hereby attach a report on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force covering the period from November 2009 to January 2010. I would appreciate your making the report available to the Security Council (see enclosure).

(*Signed*) Claudio **Bisogniero**

Enclosure

Quarterly report to the Security Council on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force

Introduction

1. The present report, pursuant to the obligation under Security Council resolution 1890 (2009) to report to the United Nations on the progress of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission, covers the period from 1 November 2009 to 31 January 2010. As at 1 February 2010, total International Security Assistance Force strength stood at 87,646 personnel, from 28 NATO nations and 15 non-NATO nations.

2. Throughout the reporting period, ISAF has continued to assist the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions. From 1 November 2009 to 31 January 2010, ISAF suffered 794 casualties, including 89 killed in action, 696 wounded in action and 9 non-battle-related deaths. Key issues have been:

(a) Based on relevant decisions of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, on 28 January 2010, the London Conference on Afghanistan agreed on targets for significant increases in the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police supported by the international community: 171,000 Afghan National Army and 134,000 Afghan National Police by the end of 2011, taking total security force numbers to over 300,000;

(b) Also at the London Conference, the international community and the Government of Afghanistan welcomed the NATO decision to develop a plan for phased transition to Afghan security leadership, province by province, possibly beginning at the end of 2010 or early 2011. It was agreed that the transition to Afghan National Security Forces lead must not be premature but must be conditions-based, and that as conditions were met, ISAF would move to a supporting role in those provinces. Transition is in itself a process and does not signify withdrawal;

(c) The unremitting efforts of ISAF, based on effective implementation of the new approach of the Commander ISAF, General McChrystal, to reduce civilian casualties and collateral damage, continue to show positive results. Civilian casualties caused by anti-Government forces continue to climb (chiefly as a result of improvised explosive devices). In its efforts, ISAF continues to reduce civilian casualties as well as damage to infrastructure and property.

Security situation

3. The insurgents in Afghanistan remain a resilient force, adapting their methods in relation to the increased capacity and capability of ISAF/Afghan National Security Forces. The insurgents typically avoid direct confrontations with large contingents of ISAF and Afghan National Security Forces in order to preserve combat power and continue to intimidate the local population. This is evidenced by the significant increase in improvised explosive device events as compared to the past year. Additionally, insurgents have continued to conduct a low, but relatively steady, number of high visibility attacks in urban areas and Highway 1, with the

focus on Kabul City due to the media impact that can be achieved there. The output of such incidents has continued to result in numbers of innocent civilian casualties caused by the insurgents, while the Afghan National Security Forces have demonstrated an increasing capability to counter such attacks. Overall, these high visibility attacks continue to clearly demonstrate the willingness among the insurgents to conduct attacks with no regard to civilian, domestic or foreign lives. According to public reports, the insurgents are concerned about their losses in Pakistan and Afghanistan, which place a strain on their leadership and cause more frequent reliance upon activity requiring less manpower and cooperation among their groups.

4. The threat remains decentralized, with several insurgent groups, dominated by the Taliban, and a similar set of goals: withdrawal of international forces, removal of the Government of Afghanistan and establishment of a fundamentalist, authoritarian and theocratic regime. Regionally, the security situation is as follows:

(a) *Regional Command Capital*. The insurgents continue to target Regional Command Capital as a high-value/high-pay-off target area, exploiting the media and the international presence to support propaganda efforts. Although there was a spike in activity during the electoral process in August, the insurgent activity level for 2009 was below that in 2008, and the November/December 2009 numbers were equal to or lower than the November/December 2008 numbers. While the January attack in Kabul received a great deal of media attention, with some characterizing it as Taliban "resilience", one should bear in mind that the event was conducted by seven insurgents and was effectively contained by the Afghan National Security Forces. The overall threat level is expected to remain high in the coming months, with the associated potential for improvised explosive device and other deadly attacks remaining significant;

(b) *Regional Command North*. Despite a rise in insurgent activity, security in Regional Command North remained relatively stable compared to other regions. Violence is linked rather to criminal activity, drugs and corruption and is still the most important security concern. In recent months, Regional Command North has seen isolated, coordinated insurgent activity, provoked by key activists and facilitated by external financial and logistics support, emanating mainly from secluded areas. Outside of these areas, local dynamics allow the population to resist the insurgency, even where there is minimal ISAF or Afghan National Security Forces presence;

(c) *Regional Command West*. There has been an increase of insurgents activity in the past few months. Ethnic tensions, powerbrokers, criminality and smuggling activities add to the volatility of the region. Outside of Herat, the rule of the Government remains weak and order is generally enforced by local powerbrokers. As coalition forces focus their efforts in areas of Regional Command South, pressure on insurgents lines of communication and safe havens in the West has risen;

(d) *Regional Command South*. Regional Command South remains the focal point for Taliban operations, with a continued focus on Helmand and Kandahar Provinces, with the insurgents, including foreign fighters, attempting to expand their influence in the urban areas. An increase of combined Afghan National Security Forces/ISAF operations and presence has threatened the safe havens of the insurgents and disrupted their supply lines and freedom of movement. In some

areas, the high threat level is hampering reconstruction and development projects. The reporting period saw the planning of a major operation in Regional Command South, Operation Moshtarak, which aims to tackle insurgent strongholds in Helmand Province in order to reduce their freedom of movement and to restore the governance of the Government of Afghanistan throughout this region;

(e) *Regional Command East*. The insurgency in Regional Command East is considered to be splintered, with different insurgent groups operating in separate areas. The area also experienced an increase in kinetic events, including direct and indirect fire, as well as improvised explosive device emplacements along the main supply routes. The insurgents are able to target bases and supply routes along the border and inhospitable terrain in the mountainous areas.

5. Improvised explosive device attacks continue to cause the majority of casualties among ISAF, Afghan National Security Forces and Afghan civilians. The use of improvised explosive devices by insurgents rose 87 per cent over the same period last year and has contributed to significant civilian casualties. However, the number of discoveries remains higher than detonations, representing during the same time frame 58 per cent of all improvised explosive device events.

Afghan National Army

6. The Afghan National Security Forces as a whole is assessed to be smaller than required to cope with the demands of fighting the insurgents. The need to increase the size and capability of the Afghan National Army is a vital part of this strategy. The London Conference reached an agreement to increase the Afghan National Army end strength at a faster rate than had been previously approved. Current enlistment success offers encouragement that the new milestones can be reached, but critical training resources must also be provided to enable this. Shortfalls remain in both institutional trainers and in operational mentor and liaison teams.

Afghan National Police

7. The Afghan National Police continues to lag behind the Afghan National Army in terms of its development. Late 2009 assessments of the Afghan National Police operational status indicate that the Afghan National Police is weaker than anticipated, both in the quality of some of those serving and in the operational capacity of some of its core bodies. Following his own 30-day initial assessment, the Commander of the new NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan ordered a thorough, urgent review of all Afghan National Police activities. The ongoing review is examining the Afghan National Police/Afghan National Army relationship, the capacity of the Ministry of the Interior, recruiting and retention, corruption, leadership capacity, training, partnering and logistics. The responsibility of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan for assisting in developing both the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police will allow a more holistic approach to assisting the Afghan National Security Forces. However, substantial NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan staffing shortfalls must be addressed to fully realize the advantages of the new organizational structures. With regard to total force strength, the recently endorsed target of 134,000 personnel is likely to be met; however, ultimate success is dependent on the commitment of the international community in resourcing the training, partnering and mentoring functions. The Afghans themselves must reduce the Afghan National Police attrition rate while attracting the

right number of good recruits. During the reporting period, greater in-theatre coordination at the staff level has taken place with the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan and other international presences through the Police Coordination Board regarding the training of the Afghan National Police.

Afghan National Army Air Corps

8. The Afghan National Army Air Corps is supported by the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan and continues to grow slowly while increasing its capabilities. In November, the Afghan National Army Air Corps received the first 3 of an anticipated 18 C-27s, which will become the backbone of the Afghan transport capability. Moreover, there has been a significant increase in the helicopter fleet, providing much greater flexibility for medical evacuations (MEDEVAC) and other battlefield mobility missions, while simultaneously enabling the Afghan National Security Forces to commence joint operations.

Counter-narcotics

9. The Government of Afghanistan recognizes Afghanistan's responsibility to engage the illicit narcotics industry and its links to the insurgency, crime and corruption. The eight pillars of the Afghan National Drug Control Strategy target areas identified as having potentially the most sustainable impact on the drug trade. The current priorities of the Strategy focus on strengthening legal rural livelihoods, disrupting the networks and linkages between the insurgency and criminal entities, reducing demand for illicit drugs as well as continuing to develop State institutions. In order to carry out these objectives, the Strategy promotes a comprehensive approach to counter-narcotics: building institutions, alternative livelihoods, interdiction and law enforcement, information campaigns, criminal justice, demand reduction and regional cooperation. The ultimate aim of the Strategy is to ensure a sustainable decrease in cultivation, production, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs, with a view to complete and lasting elimination of these illicit narcotics.

10. ISAF continues to focus on cross-agency coordination while simultaneously enhancing operational support to the counter-narcotics efforts of the Government of Afghanistan. Provincial reconstruction teams have continued to work towards providing guidance for provincial planners, which has contributed to the promotion of alternative livelihood programmes and has been reinforced by information operations. ISAF has liaised closely with and supported governor-led eradication campaigns to enable their maximum effectiveness. While not directly engaged in operations against cultivation, ISAF has provided logistical and intelligence support to Afghan forces, operating within the current counter-narcotics mandate and resources. With the establishment of the ISAF Joint Command, coordination of ISAF support to counter-narcotics operations by Government forces, including the Combined Joint Inter-Agency Task Force and the Interagency Operations Coordination Centre, has been simplified. The recent delegation of authority to support such operations, from the Commander ISAF to the Commander Intermediate Joint Command should further streamline this process.

Governance

11. During the reporting period, NATO and ISAF were involved in preparations for the London Conference of 28 January 2010, in coordination with the

Government of Afghanistan via the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board and the international community. It was especially conducive to the increasing civil-military integration that there was growing consensus between ISAF and the leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan on the way forward in Afghanistan, an issue recognized as vital for the success of the ISAF mission by both NATO and the United Nations.

12. ISAF rendered support at all levels to the Government of Afghanistan, including through the provincial reconstruction teams, encouraging the central government to engage with the provincial and district levels, supporting governors in projecting their authority, and facilitating local government to function. In addition to one existing civilian provincial reconstruction team in Wardak, many provincial reconstruction teams have already substantially increased their civilian component, with several teams currently functioning at a 50/50 civilian to military basis.

13. The lack of institutionalized rule of law, the level of corruption, the absence of a proper prison system and the existence of a nexus between crime and insurgency all continue to impact on the measure of security ISAF can deliver in its supporting role. However, progress is expected on all of these vital elements in 2010 following the consensus achieved at the London Conference.

14. ISAF has been working in close cooperation with Government ministries to assist in the development of the handling of trade in and out of Afghanistan at the border crossing points. Special border coordination centres have been set up in partnership with donor nations and the Government to improve the facilities at commercial border crossing points in order to assist in revenue collection and the administration of customs processes.

Civilian casualties

15. One of the most important issues facing the ISAF mission is the necessity to minimize civilian casualties. Along with Afghan National Security Forces partners, ISAF has maintained a continuous effort at reducing civilian casualties and collateral damage, and every effort will be made to continue this trend. This ongoing endeavour is of critical importance as troop levels continue to increase in 2010. Specifically, the implementation of the tactical directive of the Commander ISAF regarding civilian casualties has resulted in a marked reduction in the proportion of civilian casualty incidences attributable to Afghan National Security Forces/ISAF, while the vast majority of civilian casualties are caused by anti-Government forces. Meanwhile, ISAF continues efforts to improve communication and enhance transparency and accountability and the Commander ISAF continues to stress the importance of preventing civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure and property.